

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HOME AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:397
ANSWERED ON:26.07.2005
REPRESENTATION FROM KASHMIRI PUNDITS
Hasan Chaudhary Munawwar

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether any representations from the associations of Kashmiri Pundits have been received by the Government regarding pilgrimage to Sharda Mata located in PoK;
- (b) if so, the steps taken/being taken by the Government in this regard; and
- (c) the time by which permission is likely to be given to Kashmiri Pundits?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SRIPRAKASH JAISWAL)

(a): Yes, Sir.

(b)&(c): The visit of pilgrims between India and Pakistan is covered under the bilateral 'Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines-1974'. The Protocol lists the names of shrines in both the countries for the visit of pilgrims and the 'Sharda Mata Temple' is not included in the list presently. During the talks between Prime Minister and President of Pakistan held on April 16-18, 2005, it was agreed to pursue further measures to enhance interaction and cooperation across the LoC including agreed meeting points for divided families, trade, pilgrimages and cultural interaction. It has been the endeavor of the Government to expand the scope of the Protocol to enhance people to people contact between the two countries. It is not possible to give any time-frame in the matter.